

THE

11632. P. 58
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HUNAMITE.

A SACRED

ESSAY,

On 2d KINGS, Chap. iv. Ver. 8, &c.

By JAMES MAXWELL,
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THE
SHUNAMITE, &c.

2 KINGS, Chap. iv. Ver. 8, &c.

ASSIST me, O ye heav'nly Pow'rs above,
I thee invoke, O sweet celestial Dove !
Inspire the cogitations of the Muse,
That she her slender quill aright may use.
Thou'rt not confin'd to Carmel's flow'ry shade,
Nor to the lands where Isra'l tribes once stray'd ;
But ev'ry place, O Lord, is full of thee,
O therefore grant thy gracious aid to me !
Inspire my mind ; my humble accents raise,
'To sing thy wonders and proclaim thy praise.
The wondrous deeds thou hast perform'd of yore,
Let them be sounded far from shore to shore :
Let Adam's sons thy matchless wonders hear,
And ev'ry one lend an attentive ear,
While I the wonders of thy grace display,
And make thy praise the subject of my lay.

Thus spake the Shunamite with ardent flame,
And round her straight the list'ning neighbour came,
And all attentive to the wondrous tale,
Which did the mighty deeds of God reveal.
Attend, said she, ye seed, of Abra'm hear,
And to Jehovah's mighty acts give ear.
So shall you hear the most surprising things,
How life from death, how joy from sadness springs.

My lord and I, whom Heav'n hath blest with store,
 Made this our study still to help the poor.
 Like faithful stewards, we bent still our ear,
 The prayers of the indigent to hear—
 To help the helpless, needy, humble poor,
 And lodge the strangers that came to our door.
 By Heav'n's decree at last Elisha came,
 A man who breath'd a most celestial flame;
 Who by his Master's high supreme command,
 Came preaching virtue to a sinful land:
 He also deign'd to lodge within our gate,
 And to accept our hospitable treat:
 And so from time to time made this his home,
 To take a lodging in our humble dome.

Then to my lord said I, Come let us make
 A chamber for him, for his Master's sake:
 A bed and table let us too prepare,
 And all things necessary for his fare,
 That when he comes, let us conduct him there.

'Tis done, and lo, the prophet quickly came,
 Mov'd with a gracious, and benignant flame:
 Touch'd with a sense of gratitude, said he,
 "What kind of favour can I do for thee?
 Would'st thou be spoken for unto the King!
 Or Captain Chief? or any other thing?"
 Honours in Court or Camp he then propos'd,
 Which I refus'd, and thus my mind disclos'd:

The God of Heav'n hath plac'd us in this land,
 And gives us blessings with a lib'ral hand.
 Already we enjoy an affluent store,
 Why should we then be covetous of more?
 Let worldly honours be bestow'd on them,
 Who place their happiness on fleeting fame:
 Such, let them live in golden chains of state,
 And barter happiness to be made great.
 But as for us contented we remain,
 Nor would we peace exchange for sordid gain.

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Here we can feed the indigent, nor cease
 To clothe the bare with our superfluous fleece :
 And lodge the weary pilgrims in their need ;
 Yea, and refresh the hungry with our bread.
 This we prefer to gaudy pomp and show,
 Which only serve to varnish over woe.
 The shining ornaments that deck the proud,
 Are only sports to the beholding crowd ;
 Yet never give content, nor settled rest
 To those vain minds by whom they are possess'd.

Then said the prophet's servant, " O my lord,
 Heav'n hath on her his bounty richly stor'd.
 All blessings but an heir he hath bestow'd,
 And only this hath Heav'n not yet allow'd.
 And now her husband's old, without an heir
 T' enjoy the fruit of all their prudent care."

This when the holy prescient sage had heard,
 He call'd for me, then I to him appear'd.
 And as my feet approach'd the sacred room,
 I saw his face diviner looks assume :
 Not with a wildness or fantastic mien,
 With which some say the Delphic priests were seen,
 When they for mysteries of fate, explain
 The mad chimæras of a frantic brain :
 But with a grave majestic air he stood,
 While more than human all his aspect shew'd.
 Celestial grace possess'd his rev'rend look,
 And pow'r divine he certainly partook.
 Then with beneficence he me address'd,
 While thus by inspiration he express'd.

" Hail, pious Matron ! thy material cares
 Are not forgot, nor fruitless are thy prayers.
 Propitious Heav'n, thy virtuous deeds to crown,
 Shall make his kind reward to thee be known.
 According to the time of life next year,
 Thy barren womb a joyous son shall bear."
 Thus spake the prophet, and to my great joy,
 As he foretold, I bare the promis'd boy.

The news whereof was quickly spread abroad,
 And all my friends ador'd the pow'r of God.
 With floods of joy they altogether run,
 With fond affection to behold my son!
 Hailing with kind salutes the new born child,
 And with their pious hymns my pains beguil'd.
 When all had done I mov'd my joyful tongue,
 And thus to Heav'n I rais'd my grateful song.

" O God, what eloquence can speak thy praise,
 Or who can fathom thy stupendous ways!
 All things obey thy sov'reign dread command,
 And nothing can Almighty pow'r withstand!
 Obdurate rocks a fertile glebe shall be,
 Soon as commission they receive from thee.
 Arabian deserts shall with plenty smile,
 And curling vines adorn the sterile soil,
 At thy Almighty, thy divine command,
 And nothing can thy sov'reign pow'r withstand."

As thus she spake her audience rais'd their voice,
 Join'd in her song; in God did all rejoice.

" O God, we hear, and we adore thy grace,
 That shews such wonders to thine Isra'l's race!
 All Nature is subservient to thy will—
 Changes her course, thy purpose to fulfil!
 We for thy servants joy our thanks repay,
 With this boon gift let them be blest alway.
 And let thy guardian angels, who preside
 Over thine own, this infant's footsteps guide.
 Make spotless virtue crown his future days,
 And may he live to thine eternal praise!"
 Thus all harmoniously their voices rais'd,
 And ev'ry one the great Creator prais'd.

But soon behold, another changing scene,
 Turns all their joy to mourning, grief and pain.
 The Dame a signal gave by waving hand,
 The people all obey the mute command!
 All silent stand, and all attentive look,
 Waiting her words, while thus she mournful spoke:

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" All pleasures are imperfect here below,
 Our sweetest joys are often mixt with woe !
 The draught of bliss we hope t' enjoy in haste,
 Is often dash'd with grief before we taste !
 Ere five times had the heav'nly lamp, the sun,
 His annual course thro' all the signs had run,
 But all my hopes, my cheering hopes were gone,
 Heav'n had recall'd from me my darling son !
 In harvest time he to the reapers went,
 With chearful looks, and with a heart content,
 To see the standing corn how fair it grew,
 Likewise the bearded sheaves erect to view,
 Like an embattled army in the field,
 Such scenes did to his eyes new pleasure yield.
 But either there the searching sun display'd
 His heat too strong, which on his vitals prey'd,
 Or else some sudden apoplectic pain,
 With racking torture seiz'd his tender brain.
 His spirits fail'd ; and he began to faint,
 And to his father made his sore complaint.
 The roses in his cheeks were seen to fade,
 At once his beauty and his life decay'd !
 Soon at my house the dismal news I heard !
 Soon at my house the dying child appear'd !
 T' embrace him I with fond affection ran,
 And in a plaintive strain I thus began ;
 Alas, said I, what pain afflicts my son ?
 He tried to speak, but gave a faltering groan !
 No perfect words proceeded from his tongue,
 But on his lips the broken accents hung !
 All means I us'd that might allay his pain,
 All means I us'd, but us'd them all in vain !
 Yet while he liv'd my soul would not despair,
 Nor till he ceas'd to breathe ceas'd I my pray'r.
 Deluding hope repell'd my falling tears,
 But his increasing pains increas'd my fears.
 By hope and fear alternate was I tofs'd,
 Till hope at last in certainty was lost !

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 And all my friends ador'd the pow'r of God.
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Short and more short he drew his panting breath,
 Too sure presage of his approaching death !
 Till soon the blood congealing ceas'd to flow,
 He droopt his head with a declining bow !
 Thrice from my breast to raise his head he tried,
 And thrice sunk down again, then groan'd and died !

Thus when, with care, we've nurs'd a tender vine,
 And taught the docile branches where to twine ;
 An eastern gale, or some pernicious frost,
 Nips the young tree, then all our labour's lost !

With horror chill'd, a while I speechless stood,
 Viewing the dead, and trembling while I view'd !
 Mine eyes discharg'd their humid stores apace,
 And tears succeeded tears adown my face !
 Scarcely my heart the load of grief sustain'd !
 At length recov'ring speech I thus complain'd,
 " O fleeting joys ; inconstant as the wind,
 Which only for a moment please the mind !
 Then fly and leave a load of woes behind.

But yet in vain I thus lament and mourn,
 The soul once fled shall never more return !
 And the fair body must be now convey'd,
 To earth's dark bosom, and obscurest shade !
 Yet let me not prescribe a bound to Heav'n,
 'Twas by a miracle the child was giv'n :
 Nor can I think the wonder is more great,
 Should the departed soul resume her seat.
 What if I to Mount Carmel haste away,
 To him who did his mystic birth display ?
 His pow'rful word the barren fruitful made,
 His pow'rful word perhaps may raise the dead !
 The famous Fishbite rais'd the widow's son,
 Elisha hath as wondrous actions done ;
 When he to Jordan's rapid torrent came,
 And with his mantle smote th' impetuous stream :
 Obsequious to the stroke the waves divide,
 And raise a liquid wall on ev'ry side !

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At Jericho, long had the barren soil,
Deceiv'd the husbandman, and mock'd his toil ;
Yet at his word it grew a fruitful field,
And pois'nous springs did wholesome waters yield.

Nor can he only such great blessings send,
But curses on his pow'rful word attend :
Lo, he on Bethel brought the vengeance down ;
Just was the scourge on that opprobrious town.
When two she bears came rushing from the wood,
And slew their ill taught youth and drank their blood.

Again when Moab peace with Isra'l broke,
And vainly strove to break the servile yoke :
'Two potent kings led forth th' embattled host,
'Thro' Edom's sultry wilds and air a dust.
Where these confed'rate troops no water found—
Dry were the springs, and sterile was the ground :
The captains wanted strength, their courage fail'd,
When thirst and foes at once the host assail'd.
The kings to him their joint petitions made,
And fainting soldiers begg'd his timely aid.
Nor sought in vain ; the pow'rful word he spake,
Made flowing waters form a spacious lake !
The flowing streams advanc'd their humid train,
Till Edom's wilds became a liquid plain.
Not in more plenty did the waters run,
From out the rock when struck by Amram's son.

And who can that amazing deed forget,
Which he perform'd to pay the Widow's debt ?
Whose quantity of oil one pot contain'd ;
Yet num'rous vessels fill'd ere it was drain'd.
Sure he who such stupendous deeds hath done,
If God propitious prove, can raise my son.

Thus having said I caught the child, now dead,
And laid him on the holy prophet's bed :
Then call'd my servant to prepare the steed,
That to the prophet I might ride with speed.

Pensive and sad my mourning husband said,
" 'Tis now in vain to seek Elisha's aid ;

To-day no God the prophet's breasts inspire,
 Nor can he answer thy intense desire.
 'Tis neither now new-moon nor Sabbath-day,
 And what can any prophet do or say?

Rather than shrink, said I, I'll try to raise
 My hope, nor trust in ceremonial days.
 His God's still present, with attentive ear,
 And when he prays he's ready still to hear.
 Thus said, I urg'd my steed with eager haste,
 Swift as a mountain roe my way I prest.
 O'er hills and dales my journey I pursu'd
 Nor slack'd my pace till Carmel's mount I view'd.
 On whose delightful brow in cool retreat,
 'Midst curling vines the prophet had his seat :
 Whose twining boughs a verdant arbour made,
 The charming bow'r form'd there a peaceful shade.
 The fanning zephyrs gently play'd around,
 And shook the trembling leaves and swept the ground.
 Down humbly at his feet I prostrate fell,
 Ere I began my mournful tale to tell.

" Strive to compose thy anxious soul, said he,
 Tears can't revoke JEHOVAH's fixt decree :
 We live and die, and both as he sees fit,
 He may command, but mortals must submit.
 Equal this fate the king and peasants find,
 Nor is it ill, but to the evil mind.
 Yet if from Heav'n I can my suit obtain,
 Thy son (tho' dead) shall yet revive again "

Thus said, with looks divine, his staff he views,
 As if some pow'rful charm he meant to use ;
 Then calls his servant hastily, and said,
 " On her child's face let this be quickly laid."

O thou, said I, on whom my hopes depend,
 Do not to servants care such work commend.
 If thou thyself refuse with me to go,
 Here to th' list'ning vines I'll vent my woe—
 Still prostrate lie lamenting for my son,
 Till ev'ry hill turn vocal to my moan!

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More had I said, but grief the words suppress,
 Yet sighs and silent tears explain'd the rest.
 At last he from his verdant seat arose,
 Then hastily adown the mountain goes.
 For Shunam we our course with speed pursu'd,
 And quickly we the wish'd for city view'd.
 Now lo, th' obedient servant at the gate,
 Returning sad, without success, we met.
 The darling child, by death still vanquish'd lay,
 And death insulting o'er his captur'd prey.
 When to the house the holy seer was come,
 He with surprising pow'r approach'd the room.
 Hard by the lifeless child a while he stood,
 And from the chamber put the mourning crowd.
 'Thus done; to God he made his fervent pray'r,
 And breath'd upon the dead with vital air.
 Anon the soul resumes her pristine seat,
 Anon the heart begins again to beat!
 Life's purple current thro' the body spreads;
 Death from his conquer'd prey at last recedes.

[Thus when a prowling wolf hath seiz'd a lamb,
 He sternly guards it from its bleating dam:
 But when the shepherd comes, he quits his prey,
 And low'ring with reluctance hastes away.]

And now the prophet, to my longing arms,
 Restores the child with more than usual charms.
 The blushing rose shone brighter in his face,
 And ev'ry feature gain'd superior grace.

So when Heav'n's lamp, the ruler of the day,
 Behind the sable moon pursues his way;
 Affrighted mortals, when th' eclipse is o'er,
 Believe him more illustrious than before.

Here ends the Dame her most surprising tale,
 To which the list'ning crowd attended well.
 Now altogether join with her to raise
 Sweet hallelujahs to JEHOVAH's praise.
 Yea, all harmonious join with her to sing,
 Aloud the praises of the Eternal King.

" Holy and good art thou, O Lord of hosts,
 Of whom thy people justly make their boasts ;
 For all thy ways are wonderful and just,
 And righteous are thy works whate'er thou dost.
 Both life and death are in thy pow'rful hand,
 Both life and death obey thy just command.
 By thy great pow'r both heav'n and earth were made,
 Let heav'n and earth thy praise for ever spread.
 Thou glorious Sun, that measur'st all our days,
 Rising and setting, still proclaim his praise.
 Thou moon, and ye less glimm'ring orbs of light,
 Round this terraqueous globe that gild the night,
 Praise your Creator's pow'r that fixt you high,
 To grace the concave of the lofty sky.
 Ye seas, for ever waving to and fro,
 Praise him who makes you daily ebb and flow.
 Ye wand'ring rivers, and each purling stream,
 As ye pursue your course, his praise proclaim.
 Ye dews and mists, and humid vapours all,
 Praise him, at rising, praise him when ye fall.
 And you especially of human race,
 Ev'n all the tribes of Adam's numerous race,
 Adore the riches of his sovereign grace !
 But chiefly Isra'l, who dost daily view,
 His pow'rful works, his praises still renew !
 To thee his matchless wonders he makes known,
 And thou art chosen chiefly for his own ! "

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2 KINGS, Chap. viii. Ver. 1, &c.

PART SECOND.

A GAIN Elisha unto Shunam came,
With heavy tidings to the pious Dame ;
Namely a famine, by the Lord's command,
Was going to o'erspread all Isra'l's land.
Now therefore, said the prophet, haste and go,
Thou and thy household to escape that woe.
And know this famine seven whole years shall last,
For this decree's in heav'n already past.
The woman therefore chearfully obey'd,
For she believed what the prophet said.
To the Philistian's land she quickly went,
She and her household till seven years were spent.
But when the seven years famine were expir'd,
She from that country, homeward quick retir'd.
And when she was to her own land return'd,
From whence she had for seven long years sojourn'd,
She cried unto the king to have her land,
And house restor'd to her by his command.

Now at that time Gehazi he was there,
The king desiring him now to declare
What wondrous things Elisha he had done,
Who had inform'd him of the woman's son,
Whom he had rescu'd from the jaws of death,
After he had some days resign'd his breath.

While he was speaking thus, the woman came,
Whose presence with her son, confirm'd the same !

Then ask'd the king the woman if 'twas so,
 Who prov'd the fact, and had her proof to show.
 The king was most astonish'd at the thing,
 Which could such matchless proof before him bring!
 Then did he straight an officer command,
 To give her freely both her house and land,
 With all the fruits of increase more or less,
 Which it had brought since she was in distress.

Now let bold Atheists mock, and Deists sneer,
 And Sadducees reject a fact so clear:
 Yet can they not disprove a truth so plain,
 For all their jangling is but false and vain.

But some may say, "Where was the sep'rate soul,
 While was its body under death's controul?
 Where then was its abode at that same time?
 Was it in hell, or in the heav'n's sublime?
 Or did it with its body lie and sleep?
 Or else in purgatory howl and weep?"

Such are the janglings infidels may raise,
 All to disparage God's mysterious ways.
 But let them know, 'tis vain for mortal man,
 To try the ways of God supreme to scan.
 Might he not keep the soul thus separate,
 Ere it was fix'd in its eternal state?
 When he had foreordain'd it should remain,
 In that same state till it was join'd again
 To its own body, and should therein live,
 For so long time as he decreed to give.
 Who can set bounds to his Almighty pow'r?
 Or who controul th' eternal Governor?
 Shall he be limited by mortal man?
 Or can they his infinite wisdom scan?
 Cease then, ye infidels, nor boldly try,
 To cavil at the things of the Most High.
 You are the work of his Almighty hand,
 And therefore ought at humble distance stand.
 Nor dare dispute ought that he hath conceal'd,
 But take for truth whate'er he hath reveal'd.

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All things beside are secrets hid from you,
Nor can you find them out whate'er you do.

But cautious sceptics here may raise dispute,
Whose very nature always is to doubt;

" We know not if this tale itself be true;
Since it was long before both us and you.
'Twas neither seen nor known by any here,
Nor any, far above two thousand year:
How can we then such antient tale believe?
Who knows but it is only to deceive?"

Now if this principle were to take place,
It would debase the whole of Adam's race.
We need not then raise any more disputes,
For all mankind would then become like brutes.
No form of government could then exist,
For all would then do only what they list.
The strongest hand would only bear the sway,
And then the weakest must become their prey.
The Sceptics, Deists, Atheists, Sadducees,
Might all conjoin and do whate'er they please.
If no belief of past, nor future things,
What need of laws, or magistrates, or kings?
All then might live a while, but quickly die,
And then like dirt beneath our feet must lie.

But thanks to God, we are not so bereft,
Nor wholly to ourselves by him thus left.
'Tho' some amongst us seem this way inclin'd,
Which bring a sad reproach upon mankind.
And if they grow in number, they will be
A black disgrace to all society;
Which God forbid! O that they never may
Be once more heard of, while on earth we stay!
By various names they frequently are call'd,
Whereby mankind are very much appall'd.
Atheists, Freethinkers, Deists, Sadducees;
Sceptics, Socinians, Arians; which you please,
All centre in one point, and all agree,
To overthrow all Christianity.

Therefore let all who bear the Christian name,
 Against such gross enormities exclaim.
 Give them no quarter; but with tongue and pen,
 For ever fight against such dang'rous men.
 For they to all mankind are enemies,
 Cheating the simple with enormous lies.
 Nay, ev'n the learned, void of heav'nly grace,
 Many of them these tenets now embrace.
 Yea, many of our Reverend Clergy too,
 'Tis said, these principles likewise avow:
 Pray God, preserve the Laity that they
 May never thus be drawn the downward way:
 And send us pastors after thine own heart,
 That may the Truth with faithfulness impart.
 That so thy people all with one accord
 May ever magnify thy name, O Lord!
 And let thine enemies be all asham'd
 Who have the riches of thy grace blasphem'd.

FINIS.



